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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND NEA/IPA
NSC FOR PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2018
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: GOE HALTS TEMPORARY RAFAH OPENING DUE TO
DISTURBANCES

REF: A. CAIRO 1340
[1](#)B. CAIRO 1180
[1](#)C. CAIRO 1110

Classified By: Ambassador Margaret Scobey for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) MFA Acting Palestinian Affairs Director Barakat El-Leithy told us July 2 that the GOE shut down its temporary reopening of the Rafah border crossing because of Palestinians throwing stones at Egyptian Civilian Security Forces (CSF). El-Leithy said that the GOE had planned to open the crossing temporarily July 1 and 2 to allow 400 civilians to travel into Egypt. He noted that the GOE had pre-approved these 400 "special cases," consisting of injured and sick civilians, students with valid visas and Arab third country nationals. According to El-Leithy, 150 civilians were able to cross July 1 although the process moved slowly because many civilians who were not approved to travel to Egypt presented themselves at the Rafah crossing. The Egyptian CSF had to spend time turning away those who were not pre-approved, therefore limiting the number of pre-approved travelers who could cross in the allotted time. El-Leithy estimated that on July 1 the GOE had to turn away 5 or 6 civilians who were not pre-approved for every individual allowed to cross. On a visit to the border July 1, we observed approximately 15 ambulances on the Palestinian side of Rafah waiting to cross into Egypt.

[1](#)2. (C) El-Leithy said that on July 2, large numbers of civilians who were not pre-approved approached the Rafah crossing to try to enter Egypt. When the Egyptian CSF stopped them, the civilians began throwing stones. The GOE closed the Rafah crossing because of the disturbances and has no plans to re-open the border to allow the 250 remaining pre-approved civilians to cross, according to El-Leithy. He told us that the GOE had been trying to contact the Hamas Executive Committee to restore order on the Palestinian side, but Hamas had not responded to the GOE calls. El-Leithy speculated that the July 2 disturbances could end the temporary Rafah crossing openings, saying that "things cannot continue this way." He stressed, however, that there has been no GOE decision on the matter.

[1](#)3. (S) LAWIO Chief MG Nagy told us that the GOE closed the Rafah Crossing July 2 because of a Palestinian attempt to "breach" Egyptian territory. He said that 200 Palestinians broke through the Palestinian Rafah crossing and tried to enter Egypt. Nagy confirmed that Egyptian Border Guard Forces used water cannons to disperse the crowd and prevent a "breach." Nagy did not expect Rafah crossing to re-open July [1](#)3. He noted that 218 civilians from Gaza crossed into Egypt July 1, including 30 individuals with critical medical needs who were escorted by 16 family members.

